

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-20

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SCS-03 SCA-01 EUR-25 CIAE-00 DODE-00

PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-07 PA-04 RSC-01

PRS-01 SPC-03 SS-20 USIA-15 SSO-00 DRC-01 /125 W

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P 291855Z MAR 74

FM AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2632

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 GUATEMALA 1781

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: CPRS, PINT, GT

SUBJECT: IMPENDING EXPULSION OF MARYKNOLL PRIESTS

REF: GUATEMALA 1752

1. FATHER BREEN, ACCOMPANIED BY MARYKNOLL SUPERIOR GENERAL FATHER RAY HILL WHO IS CURRENTLY VISITING GUATEMALA, CALLED ON AMBASSADOR AFTERNOON OF MARCH 28 TO GIVE RUNDOWN OF BREEN'S INTERVIEW OF PREVIOUS DAY WITH VICE PRESIDENT CACERES WHO HAD RECEIVED BREEN AT SUGGESTION OF ARANA AND AS PRESIDENT'S REPRESENTATIVE. BREEN SAID HE MADE DEFENSE OF MARYKNOLL ACTIVITIES IN GENERAL AND CONDUCT OF PRIESTS IN QUESTION SPECIFICALLY, AND POINTED OUT UNJUSTNESS OF TAKING ACTION AGAINST THEM WITHOUT GIVING THE PRIESTS A CHANCE TO HEAR THE CHARGES AGAINST THEM AND ATTEMPT TO REFUTE THESE CHARGES. BREEN SAID THAT AS HE FELT THE MELVILLE INCIDENT OF SOME YEARS AGO, DETAILS OF WHICH THE GOG WAS NOT AWARE, PREJUDICED THAT AUTHORITIES AGAINST THE MARYKNOLLERS, HE EXPLAINED THE CASE IN DETAIL TO CACERES, POINTING OUT THAT IT WAS THE ORDER ITSELF WHICH DISCOVERED THE MELVILLES' ACTIVITIES AND CONVINCED THEM TO LEAVE VOLUNTARILY BECAUSE THE ORDER DID NOT AGREE

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WITH THE MELVILLES' PROPOSALS FOR VIOLENT ACTION

TO SOLVE SOCIO-ECONOMIC PROBLEMS.

2. BREEN SAID THAT ALTHOUGH THE INTERVIEW STARTED OUT FORMALLY AND STIFFLY, IT BECAME INCREASINGLY RELAXED AND FRIENDLY AS HE MADE HIS EXPOSITION, AND FINALLY CACERES, POINTING OUT THAT HE COULD ONLY ADVISE THE PRESIDENT AND NOT MAKE A FINAL DECISION, TOLD BREEN THAT HE HAD REVIEWED CASES OF FATHER FOX AND THE GERMAN PRIEST AND THAT HIS RECOMMENDATION THAT THEY BE ALLOWED TO STAY HAD BEEN ACCEPTED. (A NEW AND VALID RESIDENCE VISA HAS BEEN ENTERED IN FOX'S PASSPORT.) HE ASKED BREEN TO PREPARE A CONCISE MEMORANDUM COVERING THE POINTS HE HAD MADE IN THE INTERVIEW AND SAID HE WOULD STUDY THE CASE AND MAKE A REPORT OF THE CONVERSATION TO PRESIDENT ARANA.

3. BREEN SAID HE TOLD CACERES HE WOULD PREPARE A MEMO AS SOON AS POSSIBLE (HE DELIVERED IT TO CACERES' OFFICE MORNING MARCH 28). BUT POINTED OUT THAT EXPULSION ORDER DEADLINE WAS MARCH 29 AND THAT HE HAD PLANNED GET THE TWO PRIESTS OUT OF THE COUNTRY ON MARCH 28. CACERES ADVISED BREEN TO SEND CABLE TO PRESIDENT ARANA SAYING THAT, AS ARANA HAD RECOMMENDED, HE HAD CALLED ON VICE PRESIDENT TO DISCUSS PROBLEM AND RESPECTFULLY REQUESTED PRESIDENT TO GIVE INSTRUCTIONS THAT EXPULSION ORDER NOT BE EXECUTED UNTIL HE (ARANA) HAD HAD TIME TO STUDY VICE PRESIDENT'S REPORT OF THE CONVERSATION. BREEN SAID HE WOULD DO THIS AND WOULD KNOW WHERE HE STOOD IF HE RECEIVED CLEARLY POSITIVE OR NEGATIVE ANSWER. HOWEVER, HE ASKED CACERES WHAT POSITION WOULD BE IF HE RECEIVED EQUIVOCAL RESPONSE OR NONE AT ALL. CACERES SAID BREEN SHOULD GIVE CERTIFIED COPIES OF HIS TELEGRAM TO THE TWO PRIESTS UNDER EXPULSION ORDER AND THAT IF ANY AUTHORITIES QUESTIONED THEM OR MOLESTED THEM THEY SHOULD SHOW THE CABLES. BREEN SAID THAT WHILE CACERES CAREFULLY MADE NO DIRECT COMMITMENT, BREEN INTERPRETED HIS SUGGESTION AS IMPLYING THAT ONCE BREEN SENT THE CABLE NO ACTION WOULD BE TAKEN AGAINST THE PRIESTS UNTIL THE PRESIDENT HAD HAD A CHANCE TO REVIEW THE CASE FURTHER ON THE BASIS OF CACERES' CONFIDENTIAL

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REPORT TO HIM.

4. SHORTLY BEFORE SEEING THE AMBASSADOR, BREEN DID INDEED RECEIVE AN EQUIVOCAL RESPONSE--A CABLE FROM PRESIDENT SAYING MERELY "I ACKNOWLEDGE RECEIPT OF YOUR CABLE OF YESTERDAY."

5. BREEN TOLD AMBASSADOR THAT AS RESPONSE WAS NOT

NEGATIVE, AND TAKING INTO ACCOUNT WHAT CACERES HAD SAID, HE WAS INTERPRETING RESPONSE AS TACITLY AGREEING THAT PRIESTS COULD STAY UNTIL PRESIDENT HAD REVIEWED CASE. HE HAS SENT THEM TO PACIFIC COAST BEACH AT CHULAMAR OVER WEEKEND.

6. NEXT STEP PRESUMABLY IS SUBMISSION OF REPORT TO PRESIDENT BY CACERES.

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FM AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2633

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 GUATEMALA 1781

7. COMMENT: AT THIS POINT WE DO NOT KNOW WHAT FINAL RESULT WILL BE, ALTHOUGH THERE IS STILL VERY STRONG LIKELIHOOD THAT PRIESTS WILL BE EXPELLED. IT SHOULD BE NOTED THAT CACERES, WHILE MAKING IT CLEAR THAT IT WAS ARANA AND NOT HE WOULD MAKE FINAL DECISION, DID EMPHASIZE TO BREEN DURING THEIR INTERVIEW THAT HE WAS RECEIVING BREEN NOT MERELY AS VICE PRESIDENT BUT AS REPRESENTATIVE OF AND IN LIEU OF PRESIDENT, WHO HAD NOT BEEN ABLE TO RECEIVE THE FATHER. IT WILL BE RECALLED (GUATEMALA 1687) THAT AMBASSADOR STRESSED TO FOREIGN MINISTER THE IMPORTANCE WE PLACED ON THE PRIESTS HAVING A HEARING AND AN OPPORTUNITY TO RESPOND TO CHARGES AGAINST THEM. IN THE CURRENT ACTIONS BEING TAKEN BY THE GOG--THE INTERVIEW WITH THE VICE PRESIDENT, THE PROMISE THAT A REPORT WOULD BE GIVEN TO ARANA, AND THE APPARENT ACQUIESCENCE IN EXTENDING THE EXPULSION DEADLINE, THE GOG MAY WELL BE ATTEMPTING TO BUILD UP A CASE THAT THE PRIESTS HAVE

BEEN GIVEN A HEARING IN THE PERSON OF FATHER BREEN
AND THAT THEIR VIEWS, EXPRESSED THROUGH HIM, HAVE
BEEN CONSIDERED. THIS, OF COURSE, IS NOT THE TYPE
OF HEARING THAT IS SATISFACTORY FROM OUR POINT OF
VIEW--PARTICULARLY SINCE NO SPECIFICS HAVE YET BEEN
GIVEN ON THE CHARGES, BUT THE GOG MAY FEEL THAT IT
IS SOMETHING THEY COULD POINT TO AS A "HEARING" IF THE
PRIESTS ARE EVENTUALLY EXPELLED.
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